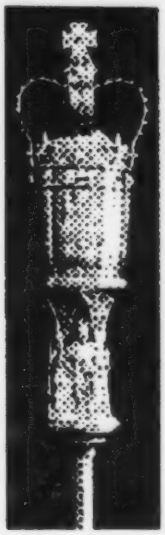

Speech from the Throne

Second Session of the
Thirtieth Yukon Legislative Assembly

Building a Strong Foundation for a Brighter Future

Delivered by Commissioner of the Yukon, Jack Cable
October 23, 2000

Mr. Speaker, Members of the Legislative Assembly, honoured guests and visitors, it is my pleasure to welcome you to the opening of the second session of the Thirtieth Legislature.

Honourable Members, you will face many challenges in this Legislature. I know those challenges will inspire each of you to work together as Yukoners, to not only listen to your constituents, but to work constructively together to find solutions. *That* is the business of government.

To be effective, government must set clear direction, it must focus upon a set of top priorities. A successful government cannot and should not try to be all things to all people.

This government will be faced with many ideas and many choices in the coming months and years, and it would be easy to allow every good idea to become a top priority. It is only focused attention, however, that will produce results that we can all be proud of as Yukoners.

With that in mind, the government has set clear direction. It has established seven priorities to address during its mandate. Those priorities are:

- Settling outstanding land claims;
- Rebuilding the Yukon economy;
- Achieving devolution;
- Developing infrastructure;
- Maintaining quality health care;
- Addressing alcohol and drug addictions; and
- Restoring confidence in government.

These priorities are not new. They form the basis of this government's contract with the people of the Yukon Territory.

The degree to which this government can act upon each of these seven priorities will be the measure of its success. They are also touchstones for the Yukon public to hold the government accountable. The major initiatives undertaken by this government will have one of these seven priorities at their foundation.

In April of this year, Yukoners asked for change. This government heard what you said, and is committed to providing strong fiscal management and accountability. This government is prepared to make the tough decisions.

While change is a priority, real results take time. Some changes need to happen sooner than others to stimulate growth. Thoughtful and considered planning is also extremely important, however, to ensure long term growth and prosperity.

This government intends to build a strong foundation for a brighter future by providing leadership and a new attitude in government. The type of leadership this government will provide is built upon both long and short-term goals.

Rebuilding the Yukon Economy:

The settlement of land claims remains this government's top priority. The settlement of outstanding claims is a key to unlocking the economic potential of the Yukon Territory.

In rebuilding the Yukon economy the government will work toward the following results in the short term:

- achieving a closer working relationship with First Nations that will result in the settlement of outstanding land claims;
- assisting the mining community through incentives and lobbying efforts;
- fully recognizing and building upon the tourism potential of our territory; and
- evaluating current economic development programs.

An important intergovernmental meeting between First Nation Leaders and the Government of Yukon was held on October 16th to reshape and enhance the territorial government's relationship with First Nations on a government to government basis. This meeting provided a foundation for ongoing communications and meaningful discussions to occur between Yukon First Nations and the territorial government.

In addition, CYFN and First Nation Chiefs from Kluane, White River, Ta'an and Carcross/Tagish have invited the territorial government to participate in a Common Forum.

The Forum will allow senior territorial and First Nation officials and negotiators to address "Yukon specific" issues. The willingness of these two governments to meet and deal with territorial issues signals a new era of co-operation in the settlement of land claims.

These short-term initiatives are designed to speed up the settlement of land claims, and bring the parties closer together.

Another important part of our economy is mining. It has a special place in the Yukon's history, and this government believes mining also has a place in the Yukon's future.

The government has already increased incentives to junior mining companies by $250,000.00, and has hosted a "Welcome Back to the Yukon" luncheon in Vancouver.

To help restore Yukon's mining industry, the government is initiating a new program that focuses on management, information, investment and infrastructure, networking and education in the mining sector. The "M.I.N.E." Program will be implemented over a four-year period.

In the "management" aspect of the "M.I.N.E." Program the territorial government will work in partnership with DIAND and industry to implement the improved administrative procedures laid out in the Blue Book. This will help to streamline and clarify the permitting process by providing clear rules for miners.

The "investment, information and infrastructure" portion of the program will include a review of the exploration tax credit, ongoing geological and other scientific and technical information and identification of the infrastructure required for key mineral districts.

The Premier attended the Mine Ministers Conference in Toronto this fall, and had a private meeting with the Federal Finance Minister in August. The purpose of these meetings was to provide an incentive for flow-through share investment. The Premier was successful in attaining a new, time-specific federal tax credit for flow-through shares that will help to kick start exploration spending in the Yukon after three years of record low expenditures.

The "networking" aspect of the M.I.N.E. program will ensure continued support for the Yukon Geology Program, and attendance at Canadian mining

trade shows including the Cordilleran Round Up and the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada Conference.

Finally, the "education" component of the M.I.N.E. Program will focus on preparing and distributing educational materials to increase public awareness about the mining industry.

In terms of economic development generally, the Yukon has not received any federal economic development funding since the last Economic Development Agreement expired in 1996.

In light of this, at the Annual Premier's Conference in September, Premier Duncan led the charge for an economic partnership to be established between northern governments and the Government of Canada. Premiers from all other jurisdictions across Canada unanimously supported this initiative. Its purpose will be to provide economic development assistance that will be used to promote strategic private sector investments in order to maximize benefits from economic growth.

In the coming months, the Department of Tourism will introduce the "Stay Another Day" Program. The program is designed to keep visitors in the Yukon longer by highlighting the Yukon's natural beauty, and it's many attractions and events. Money has been set aside in the supplementary budget to initiate the key elements of this program.

The government is also working in partnership with the Yukon Convention Bureau to promote the Yukon as a convention destination. Money has been set aside in the supplementary budget to fulfill this commitment.

Consultation on a new territory-wide museum strategy has already begun to ensure the Yukon's heritage is preserved for the enjoyment of our tourists and for future generations of Yukoners.

The territorial government is also committed to reviewing existing economic development programs to determine which ones are truly benefiting the Yukon public, starting with the Community Development Fund.

The government wants Yukoners to know it is reviewing programs like the CDF, the Tourism Marketing Fund, and the Trade and Investment Fund to provide accountability and openness in government. The review of these programs is not being done to eliminate programs that are successful in meeting their intended goals, but to gauge which programs actually produce results.

Rebuilding the economy also means planning for the future. The government will focus on achieving the following results in the longer term:

- increasing northern control over northern development by negotiating devolution;
- continuing to aggressively promote the Alaska Highway pipeline project and oil & gas development in the territory;
- bringing responsible mining and forestry back to the territory; and
- creating an industry driven tourism strategy.

The responsible and sustained development of oil and gas is an important long-term goal.

Anderson Exploration has committed to spending 20.4 million exploration dollars in the north Yukon over the next 6 years.

The Kaska Nation and the Government of Yukon have also established a cooperative working relationship to foster and stimulate economic growth in southeast Yukon. In addition to existing exploration licenses in the southeast, efforts to establish benefit agreements and process license applications pertaining to expanded activity in both southeast and north Yukon are ongoing.

Oil and gas development will be supported by annual land sales that encourage local investment by oil and gas companies.

It is a commitment of this government to balance the development of our resources with the protection of our environment. The areas that are nominated by companies will be reviewed by the Yukon public, First Nations, and the territorial government. The review will identify environmental, surface access and socioeconomic concerns.

In further recognition of the need for responsible development, this government has consistently maintained that there should be a prohibition of oil and gas activity in 10-02 Lands to protect the calving grounds of the Porcupine Caribou Herd as critical habitat.

It is responsible development that is key. Since taking office, this government has also aggressively promoted the Alaska Highway Pipeline Route with producers and pipeline companies, and has made substantial progress.

We all know what obtaining the pipeline project will mean for Yukoners. The Yukon Route already has regulatory approvals in place, environmental reviews completed, and is the subject to an existing Canada/United States treaty. This government is committed to continuing all of its efforts to secure the Alaska Highway Pipeline.

In 1978 the Northern Pipeline Agency was created in Ottawa to deal specifically with the regulation of the Alaska Highway Pipeline Project. The

Yukon government has asked the federal government to resurrect and relocate the Northern Pipeline Agency to Whitehorse.

In addition to the short-term goals already outlined in Tourism, a long-term goal of this government is to restore heritage branch funding. Our heritage is important to who we are as Yukoners, and this government wants to protect and preserve our cultural heritage for the enjoyment of our visitors, our children and our grandchildren.

Infrastructure Development:

Infrastructure development is a basic necessity for every community in the Yukon. As a result, the government has set the following goals:

- to assess the needs of Yukon communities in developing water and sewer infrastructure;
- to provide opportunities for our seniors to have access to adequate and affordable housing;
- to maintain the Yukon's network of roads and highways; and
- to recognize that communications infrastructure development is integral to our future both inside and outside of the Territory.

The Minister of Community and Transportation Services ~~is~~ will be working with our Yukon communities to prioritize water and sewer infrastructure development in rural Yukon.

The Yukon is also taking advantage of the opportunities offered by the Federal Infrastructure Program to assist communities with basic infrastructure development. The territorial government recently signed an agreement with the federal government that will result in the Yukon receiving 2.4 million dollars over three years to help fund infrastructure development in the areas of water, sewer and solid waste management.

Due to the consistent reduction of the highway capital budget by successive governments, the Yukon's roads and highways have reached a crisis stage. Over the next four years, this government intends to increase maintenance funding to ensure our highways provide safe and reliable transportation to everyone. As a first step, this government has increased the amount of money set aside for the operation and maintenance of highways in the supplementary budget.

It is only by providing sound fiscal management that the necessary capital funds will be available to reconstruct and rehabilitate our roads and highways.

Infrastructure development means roads, and it also means housing. This government recognizes that Yukon seniors and elders have invested their time, money and hard work in our Yukon communities to the benefit of all of

us. Seniors are one of the mainstays of the economy, and they have provided the foundation upon which we have built our heritage, our culture and our dreams.

The changing demographics of our territory can no longer be ignored. As our population ages, we must find creative solutions, especially in the area of seniors housing.

From 1986 to 1996 the senior population in the Yukon grew by 67% while the Yukon population as a whole increased by only 28%. This government is tackling the issue of seniors housing head on. The Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation has set aside funds in the supplementary budget to implement a brand new program called the "Seniors Housing Trust".

In addition to the Trust, the Yukon Housing Corporation is also developing a Seniors Housing Action Plan to provide seniors with the opportunity to access adequate, affordable housing.

Our history is important to who we are, and so is our future. As a result, our investments should reflect the value of our seniors and our youth. Communications infrastructure is essential to our future, our livelihood and our children. The territorial government is partnering with Human Resources Development Canada to develop a school-based web-site that will provide employment and career information to our Yukon students. This site will be demonstrated at the Yukon IT Exposition on October 26th to 28th.

The Department of Government Services is also establishing an E-Commerce Competency Centre. This is a virtual centre that will bring together those working in the field to better co-ordinate progress in E-Commerce.

Members will also be asked to approve the *Electronic Commerce Act* in this sitting. This legislation will help the Yukon compete in the ever-expanding sphere of information and communications technology.

Health Care:

Your new government will take a new approach to health care. Historically, the provision of health care has focused on access to quality hospital and medical services. Maintaining quality health care remains an important part of this government's health care initiative. We also recognize the importance of lifestyle and prevention in shaping health policy and in delivering health related programs and services.

This government believes that educating the public about the prevention of health problems is the first step in healing our communities. This healthy approach is something the government takes seriously. By taking this

approach, we can achieve a more cost-effective health care system, one that meets the needs of Yukoners.

Achieving the following results are the goals of this government:

- retaining a one-tiered health care system;
- providing education and information on preventative health care especially in the areas of alcohol and drug abuse; and
- promoting healthy lifestyles and healthy communities.

This government will shift the focus of health care toward prevention. Due to new sources of information Yukoners have an increased understanding of how socioeconomic factors and other conditions impact upon our individual and community health.

By studying changes in demographics, policies, and attitudes the Yukon is better equipped today to participate in shaping a new era in health policy.

We are all aware that Canada is experiencing a shortage of health care professionals, and that shortage is only expected to worsen in the future. The government has and will continue to implement strategies for the recruitment and retention of our health professionals. Health care officials are working directly with doctors and nurse practitioners to ensure health care needs are addressed in the most efficient and cost effective manner while maintaining quality of service.

On October 13th to 16th Health Summit 2000, "Our People, Our Most Valuable Resource" was held in Haines Junction and Ross River. The government will hold annual Health Summits during its mandate to ensure there is a continued dialogue between government and rural Yukoners in addressing their health concerns.

Rural communities have been asked to identify their specific health care needs so that a realistic and sustainable community based health care plan can be implemented.

We all recognize that our population is aging. To address the pressures on long term residential care services, and our aging population, the government has also increased the constructed bed capacity of the new long-term care facility from 72 to 96 beds.

In addition, Health Canada funding of seventy thousand dollars over 3 years will be provided to the Yukon to support the day programming initiative offered at the Thompson Centre. This initiative provides people with chronic medical and deteriorating mental health access to services to help maintain their independence at home and reduce the need for institutional care.

This government also believes it is essential to invest in our youth to achieve healthier communities.

The Department of Education and the youth organization "Bringing Youth Toward Equality", are consulting with parents, non-government organizations, inter-governmental departments and other jurisdictions to lay the groundwork for the Yukon's first Youth Directorate.

Encouraging the participation of our youth in this project is essential so that it meets their needs. The government believes it should be the dreams and ideals of our young people that guide the establishment of the Youth Directorate to ensure all of the resources available to youth are accessed.

Alcohol and Drug Addictions:

It is no secret that alcohol and drug addictions pose one of the biggest threats to our community. Together with FAS and FAE the damage caused to our young people through alcohol and drug addictions threaten the safety of our families, and our community.

Upon this government's direction, Alberta's Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission ("AADAC") conducted a comprehensive review of our program delivery and service. The report provides recommendations about how to meet the challenge of addictions head on. The frank and honest participation of the Yukon's Alcohol and Drug Services was essential to the recommendations that were made in the report.

The result of the review is the government's Strategy on Alcohol and Drug Addictions, which will be introduced later this year. The Strategy will implement many of the recommendations contained in the AADAC Report.

Prevention is a key component to the government's addictions strategy. Part of that strategy is to create better awareness about FAS and FAE through education and prevention initiatives undertaken in our schools and in our communities. This means taking a more aggressive and pro-active approach in the Yukon's FAS/FAE strategy, one, which recognizes prevention as the only cure.

In addition, the territorial government will continue to lobby the federal government to make the prevention of FAS and FAE one of the priorities of Canada's health care system.

The rising cost of addressing addictions and of health care generally cannot be ignored. Yukoners have been and will continue to be provided with information about health care costs by this government, so they know where the government spends its health care dollars.

Quality health care must be maintained through realistic budgeting. An accurate accounting of our health care dollars will be presented to the Yukon public on an ongoing basis.

At the First Ministers Meeting in September, First Ministers reached an historic and unanimous consensus on a comprehensive and forward looking Health Action Plan. The Yukon's Premier and our Minister of Health both attended the First Ministers Meeting, and supported the idea that every jurisdiction provide a Report Card to Canadians on the performance of our health care system. The Yukon is committed to presenting this report card to Yukoners and asking for public input into the strengths and weaknesses of our health care system. The report card is an important component of the commitment to providing open and accountable government.

This government's commitment to accountability speaks to another one of its main priorities which is to restore confidence in government.

Restoring Confidence in Government:

Restoring confidence in government means that Yukoners must be given an opportunity to participate in governing our territory. Cabinet tours to Yukon communities were reinstated earlier this month in Ross River and Faro. The second Cabinet tour will take place in Teslin on February 6th, 2001. This will allow Yukon communities to speak directly with Cabinet Ministers and Caucus members about the challenges facing their communities and their families.

In the six short months since it was sworn into office, members of the government caucus has traveled to every community in the Yukon Territory, talking to Yukoners. Many communities have been visited by more than one Cabinet Minister or government caucus member.

This government's commitment to serve our communities and listen to all Yukoners is solid.

At the opening of the Thirtieth Legislature the government stated that it would conduct a comprehensive review of spending priorities. In this sitting, members will be asked to approve a final supplementary budget for 2000-2001, which includes some of this government's immediate spending priorities.

It is one of the goals of this government to achieve more balanced representation of Yukoners by fulfilling its commitment to initiate an Electoral Boundary Review. In this sitting, Members of the Legislature will be asked to approve *An Act to Amend the Elections Act* that deals with the electoral

boundary review.

This government will also implement a confidential method for government employees to provide feedback. The goal is to provide a more efficient and user friendly government for all Yukoners, by asking the people who work on the front lines in the public service to suggest initiatives to make government more accessible to the public.

The government has also created a Management Improvement Program. The program will review a number of areas of government administration. In this year's plan, the program will look at Government Services, the CDF, and the required review of the *Environment Act*. The goal is to increase the efficiency of government departments in meeting the needs of the Yukon public, and in allocating resources to priorities.

Our culture, our heritage and the arts help to articulate who we are as Yukoners. The arts are essential to our northern lifestyle. The *Yukon Arts Act* will be introduced in this session to provide greater certainty to our arts community, so the Yukon's legislation is in line with current practices in the arts field.

The government is undertaking a comprehensive review of the *Yukon Liquor Act* and its *Regulations*. The Act has not been fully reviewed since its inception 23 years ago. As part of the process, a Review Committee will visit Yukon communities to allow concerned citizens to actively participate in the review by providing their ideas and suggestions.

The *Education Act* Review is currently in the consultation and recommendation phase. A team of representatives from First Nations, school councils, teachers, and the department of education is conducting 8 community tours to develop community-based recommendations for improvements to the *Education Act*.

A three-part review of the *Wildlife Act* will also be initiated. Enforcement issues will be considered during the first phase of the review.

The Yukon Protected Areas Strategy Advisory Committee will review the implementation of the Yukon Protected Areas Strategy. An options paper is being prepared to address three areas of concern raised by stakeholders. These areas are: preparing resource, ecological and socio-economic value assessments; enshrining YPAS in legislation; and clarifying the roles and responsibilities involved in implementing the YPAS process fairly and transparently.

In this session, the government will introduce a Motion to create a select committee to make all party appointments to major government boards and committees. After the motion is passed by the Legislative Assembly, the

Committee will assist in making those appointments.

Yukoners have chosen a new government to lead them into this next century. While this government passed the previous administration's budget to create certainty, Yukoners said they want a different style of government.

Yukoners want change in the way their tax dollars are managed, in how their health care is provided, and in the willingness of their government to be accountable.

Choices and hard decisions are necessary to ensure that we meet these goals. Your new government will work hard to make the difficult choices, to chart the proper course, and to steer us in the right direction.

This change will not happen quickly enough for some, and it may happen too quickly for others . . . but it will happen.

As Yukoners, we envision a Territory where opportunity is built upon the strength of our land, the diversity of our people, and the openness of our government.

The measure of success will be the ability of individuals and communities to seize opportunities and realize their goals.

The members of the Thirtieth Legislature of the Yukon Territory are the stewards of the first four years of the new millennium.

I wish you well in your deliberations and in the challenges and opportunities you will face.